Assassinations' panel may live with Stokes

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WASHINGTON — Rep. Louis Stokes' acceptance of the House Assassinations Committee chairmanship could be a sign that the panel will survive-to investigate the deaths of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Stokes, 52, a Democrat from Cleveland, Ohio, is known for his willingness to undertake a challenge, but colleagues say he is not a man "to preside over a dying horse." They claim Stokes never would have agreed to head the committee without assurances from the congressional leadership that its mandate will be renewed.

The committee, which has been wracked by internal dissension and weakened by public criticism, goes out of business March 31 unless it convinces the House to extend its life.

Stokes was given the new assignment yesterday after the House accepted the resignation of Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex) as chairman.

Gonzalez's problems with the committee stemmed from a bitter feud with chief counsel Richard A. Sprague. Although there appears to be little or no friction between Stokes and Sprague, Stokes does not go along with Sprague's past contention that $6.5 million is needed to conduct the investigations properly.

REP. LOUIS STOKES
. . . heads probe

Stokes was head of the subcommittee considering a revised budget request to be submitted later this month. This subcommittee held its first meeting yesterday, but did not come up with a money figure. One of Stokes' first duties will be to appoint a new budget chairman.

Stokes is known for his tenacity and for the meticulous way in which he prepares a case for whatever viewpoint he is representing.